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NSC BRIEFING

8 December 1953

RECENT ~~ARMY~~ PROMOTIONS IN THE SOVIET UNION

- I. Unusual number of promotions to high rank and changes in the Soviet ~~Army~~ high command since Stalin's death.
- A. There have been 8 recent high level promotions of professional ~~army~~ officers. None of those promoted have any apparent connection with high level political figures.
1. P. F. Zhigarev and M. I. Nedelin, to grade of Marshal.
 2. N. G. Kuznetsov to grade of Admiral of the Fleet.
 3. K. S. Moskalenko, ^{M. M.} ~~N. M.~~ Popov, S. S. Biryusov, A. A. Grechko, and M. S. Malinin to grade of army general.
 - a. These are the only known promotions to these ranks since 1948.
 - b. In 1948, there were four promotions to army general; the only such promotions since the end of World War II.
- B. Since Stalin's death there have been a number of changes in command;
1. Marshal Zhukov has been brought out of obscurity to become a First Deputy Minister of Defense.
 2. There has been a change in the commands of the Chief Political Directorate; in Soviet occupation troops in Germany and in Austria; in the Military districts with headquarters at Kiev, Leningrad, and Vladivostok; in the three important commands in the Moscow area; and a reported change of the Chief of the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff.
- II. Possible explanations of these unusual changes;
- A. Zhukov may have been given mission to revise and coordinate Soviet war pland.

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- a. Post-Stalin reorientation of USSR must affect defense structure, and therefore war plans must be revised.
- b. Zhukov's Europe-wide command experience makes him logical man to effect this.
- c. Recent promotions consistent with the creation of new commands.
- d. Possibly indicate the organization of large subordinate planning headquarters.

B. Other studies indicate:

1. A lack of evidence to support the above view in its entirety.
 - a. No evidence of creation of new commands or large subordinate planning headquarters.
 - b. No concise pattern in the changes of command.
 - c. Many of the promoted men identified as late as 7 November is known far flung posts.
2. Some de-emphasis of MVD.
 - a. Appointment of Army Officer as MVD Minister in Georgia.
 - b. No MVD representation in Party Presidium.
 - c. The assignment of Army Officer as commandant of the Kremlin, an MVD command.
 - d. Criticism of MVD on local levels.

C. Tentative conclusions.

1. Governmental reorganization following Stalin's death has probably caused a review of Soviet military plans and estimates.

2. Changes and promotions indicate probable flux in high levels of the Soviet Armed forces.
3. Possibly indicate an attempt to increase prestige of combat experienced commanders in the armed forces.
4. Possibly indicate a desire to increase the prestige of the armed forces by de-emphasizing the position of the MVD in the public eye.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

	<u>New Rank</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>When Identified as Promoted</u>
D. F. ZHIGAREV	Marshal of Aviation	Probably Deputy Minister for Aviation.	July '53

Born in 1900, Zhigarev has held high commands in the Soviet Air Force since 1936. He has been described by German Intelligence Sources in 1943, as one of the most capable generals in Soviet military aviation and as a careful organizer, well schooled in operations and tactical problems.

N. I. NEDELIN	Marshal of Artillery	Deputy Minister of Defense	July '53
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Nedelin is about 56 years old and had extensive combat experience during World War II. He is reportedly pleasant, nationalist and patriotic, energetic and ambitious, but not politically minded.

N. G. KUZNETSOV	Admiral of the Fleet	First Deputy Minister of Defense	2 June '53
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Kuznetsov's dynamic personality, great ability and long experience fit him well for both governmental and command aspects of his high position. He is an individual of absolute self-assurance, decisiveness, and ruthless ambition.

K. S. MOSKALENKO	Army General	Commander, Moscow Military District	October '53
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Born in 1900, Moskalenko has held top command positions since 1940. During World War II he had extensive combat and command experience.

M. M. POPOV	Army General	Commander, Tauric Military District	7 November '53
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Born in 1896, Popov is one of the Soviet Army's Senior Generals and, since 1943, has consistently had assignments commensurate to his rank. He had extensive combat command experience during World War II.

S. S. BIRYUSOV	Army General	Commander, Central Group of Forces, Austria	October '53
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Biryusov, although commander of the third Ukrainian Front in 1944, has no outstanding military record. A life-long, devoted Communist, he held an important semi-military position in the Allied Control Commission in Bulgaria from 1945-47, and in this position consistently interfered in Bulgarian internal politics.

A. A. GRECHKO	Army General	Commander, Group of Occupation Forces, Germany	7 November '53
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Grechko now 50 years old, had extensive combat command experience during World War II. He was rated by German intelligence as a good tactician, brave, coarse and tactless.

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	<u>New Rank</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>When Identified as Promoted</u>
M. S. MALININ	Army General	Deputy Chief of Staff, Ground Forces	August '53

Malinin was Chief of Staff to Rokossovsky during most of World War II and in 1945 became Chief of Staff to Zhukov, He remained in Germany until 1948, when he returned to Moscow, possibly as Deputy Chief of the General Staff.

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10 December 1953

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IN THE SOVIET UNION

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- A. There have been eight recent high-level promotions of professional military officers. None of those promoted have any apparent connection with high-level political figures.
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 2. N. G. Kuznetsov to grade of Admiral of the Fleet.
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- a. These are the only known promotions to these ranks since 1948.
 - b. In 1948, there were four promotions to army general; the only such promotions since the end of World War II.
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2. There has been a change in the commands of the Chief Political Directorate; in Soviet occupation troops in Germany and in Austria; in the military districts with headquarters at Kiev, Leningrad and Vladivostok; in the three important commands in the Moscow area; and a reported change of the Chief of the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff.

II. Possible explanations of these unusual changes:

A. Zhukov may have been given mission to revise and coordinate Soviet war plans.

1. Principal supporting arguments:

a. Post-Stalin reorientation of USSR must affect defense structure, and therefore war plans must be revised.

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- a. Appointment of army officer as MVD Minister in Georgia.
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C. Tentative conclusions:

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3. Possibly indicate an attempt to increase prestige of combat-experienced commanders in the armed forces.
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